



Facts you should know about the vital local services you control by your vote

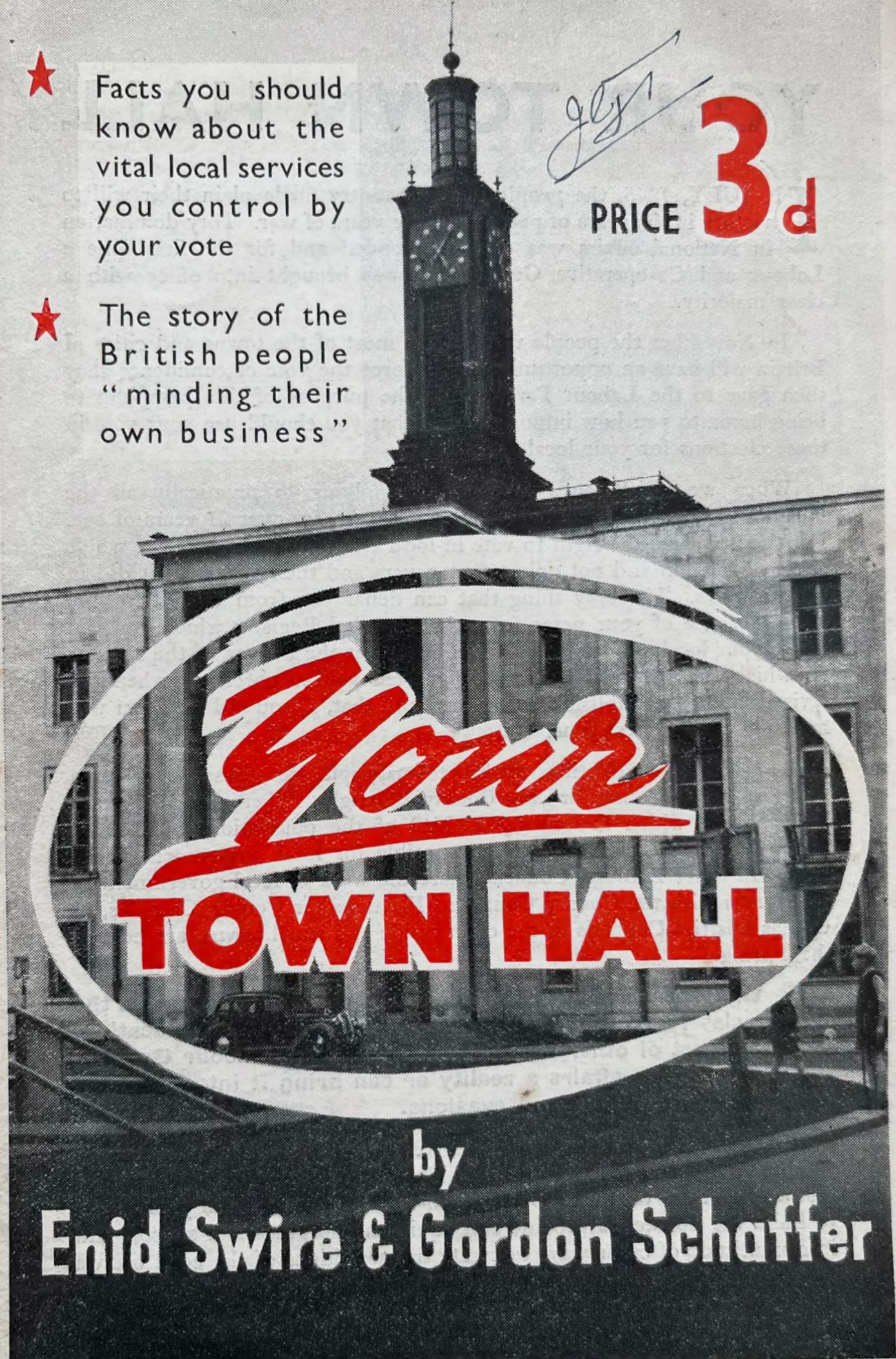
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The story of the British people "minding their own business"



**Your  
TOWN HALL**

by

**Enid Swire & Gordon Schaffer**

# YOUR TOWN HALL

**I**N JULY, 1945, the people of this country made plain their will to victory in the years of peace as in the years of war. Tory domination in National affairs was decisively ended and for the first time a Labour and Co-operative Government was brought into office with a clear majority.

In November the people who live in most of the towns and cities of Britain will have an opportunity to reinforce the vote of confidence they then gave to the Labour Party. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to bring home to you how important it is that you should use your vote in these elections for your local authorities.

When we say "your vote" we are talking to practically all the inhabitants of towns, both great and small, who are over 21 years of age. For the first time the right to vote in local elections belongs to the whole adult population and not only to ratepayers and their wives, as it did in pre-war days. The only thing that can debar you from a right to vote is the absence of your name from the Electoral Register which you can see at your local council office. We hope that the defects of the register on which the July election was fought led you to check up when the revised lists were published in August, and that, if you did not, you will make no mistake next time.

The November elections are for townspeople—for those who live in what are called County or Non-County Boroughs. There are 83 County Boroughs in which live nearly a third of the population. A County Borough Council is completely responsible for local government in its area. All other Borough Councils share the work of local government in their areas with the County Councils. Elections for County Councils, as well as District Councils in the countryside and small towns, are held in the Spring.

**Why are these bodies of such importance? Because as the agencies for National policy in Housing, Health, Education, and a host of other matters they can make Labour Government in home affairs a reality or can bring it into disrepute by failures, delays, and evasions.**

You sent a Labour and Co-operative Government to Westminster to produce a general plan for Houses, Health, and Happiness. Now it is just as important to get Labour and Co-operative Councils in your towns to build the houses, to provide and equip the hospitals and schools and in a multitude of other ways to create the conditions of the good life we know to be possible.

It is often said that party politics should not enter into local affairs. This is typical of the Tory line at a time when they know that they have no policy to offer even as a deception of the people. It explains their preference for lining up in local elections under a variety of disguises—as Municipal Reformers, Independents, and the like.

This is only a repetition at the local level of their impudent attempts to label themselves as “National” for General Election purposes.

All too often the membership of our Town Councils fails utterly to represent the interests of the 80 per cent of the inhabitants of the town who work for wages and salaries. Too frequently it is drawn from a narrow class of High Street traders, property owners and speculators, nominees of big business, and highly paid professional men whose conception of public needs is inevitably ruled by their own limited interests.

**Town planning schemes delayed and whittled down by speculative building interests; bad building condoned by councillor builders “in the ring”; library projects hampered by private booksellers; public medical services restricted by intervention of private medical practitioners are all examples of the damage done to community interests by this type of “non-party” representation.**

The pity is that this state of affairs has in the past produced a cynical apathy amongst electors who, failing to recognise the value and importance of much that is done in local government, have not availed themselves of the opportunities at election time to choose men and women as councillors who represent the real interests of the mass of the people.

Labour and Co-operative Councillors have the duty of carrying out Labour and Co-operative Policy. They form part of the democratic organisation of these great movements in which policy is laid down by ordinary men and women and not by representatives of monopoly and privilege.

## HOUSING PROBLEM

What are the main tasks facing our Town Councils? Without doubt, to-day the overwhelming domestic problem is housing, and if we look back to the years between the wars we see that the two Acts of Parliament—the Wheatley Act of 1924 and the Greenwood Act of 1930—which really enabled local councils to get on with the job, were both passed by Labour Governments. The Chamberlain Act of 1923, with its insistence on subsidies to private builders and inadequate aid for local councils, failed to provide houses to rent, because it relied on the speculative builder and not on community enterprise.

Labour Councillors, because they come from the people, know what the people expect in the matter of housing. They can be trusted to take full advantage of the powers that a Labour Government is committed to give them and they will think, too, of more than the individual house.

They will work, as the plan drawn up by the Labour London County Council has shown, to a scheme that will make our towns both good to look at and desirable to live in. Uncontrolled building development, houses built ribbon fashion to secure quick profits for the builder, mean real waste of labour and resources and unnecessary expenditure of public money in the development of roads, sanitary and transport services, street lighting, and the provision of schools and hospitals.

Such building leaves pockets of derelict and undeveloped land but fails to set aside open spaces for recreation in the places where they are really needed.

Social losses of this sort do not figure in the balance sheets of private builders and land speculators. They do figure in increased rates by which the public pays for the freedom of the speculative builder to develop our towns as and how he likes regardless of the fact that people need more than just a house to live in.

They figure, too, in statistics of illness and premature death, and of child victims of road accidents. Lack of town planning in everyday life means the school built on the wrong side of the by-pass, the housing estate without clinic or meeting place, lack of local shopping facilities, and an increase in unnecessary drudgery for already overworked wives and mothers.

## **A SHOCKING MUDDLE**

The appalling shortage of houses cannot be over-estimated. The knowledge haunts every young couple hoping to start a home. The Labour Government has taken over a shocking muddle in national policy. During the Coalition Government even prominent Tories, such as Lord Astor, complained of the lack of powers which Town Councils possessed in the past.

There is a three-fold problem to be faced:—

- (1) To build houses. At the outbreak of war in 1939 we had a serious shortage of working-class houses. All towns had a long waiting list of applicants for any council house which fell empty. Bombing and the cessation of house building during the war has made this problem worse at a time when there has been a big increase in marriages and therefore an increased demand for separate dwellings.
- (2) To replace as soon as possible the slum and near-slum houses that still disfigure so many of our towns.
- (3) To carry out in the meantime a vigorous policy of inspection and repair of existing houses and to operate rent control powers to the full.

Any Tory suggestion that private enterprise can be left to cope with these matters is disproved by the whole history of housing over the last century.

**Private enterprise built our slums, the rows of back-to-back houses and mean streets of so many of our towns. When even meagre standards of space and convenience were demanded by our building by-laws private enterprise found it no longer profitable to erect working-class houses to let.**

Instead it persuaded people of modest means to incur heavy debts for purchase of houses which all too often were built too shoddily to last the life of the mortgage repayment on them.

To cope with the immediate shortage powers will be needed that can be entrusted only to democratic local authorities. These include easier acquisition of land, provision of long-term loans at low rates of interest, and subsidies by the Central Government, as well as extensive powers of requisitioning and adaptation of empty properties.

Labour Councils can be trusted to press for the real advantages that can be got from pre-fabricated buildings and fittings, but they will not tolerate the indefinite use of temporary buildings, however necessary they may be to meet the immediate situation.

What is needed is a long-term building programme that will guarantee a house suitable in size and convenience to each family, with proper thought for the housewife's workshop. Where flats are needed to conserve land they must have the convenience which made the wealthy favour them, and not the defects that have brought working-class flats into disrepute.

We have to-day a larger number of old people in this country than ever before, and the number is still growing. Labour Councils before the war led the way in building suitable flats and houses for the aged. Special attention must be given to the needs of old people in the new housing drive.

Such a programme can be made a reality only by local councils using fully the powers they already possess, together with the additional ones that a Labour Government will give them. Building resources must be mobilised under the control of progressive local councils: only in that way shall we be safe from the clamour of private builders and building societies to go ahead with profitable middle-class developments regardless equally of working-class needs and the proper planning of our towns.

While new houses are being built, private landlords must be required to put dwellings into a proper state of repair. For over half a century the town councils had the power to insist on necessary repairs on the

basis of inspections and reports from their officers. The extent to which these powers have been exercised has notoriously varied with the composition of councils. A council dominated by property owners does not appoint too many sanitary inspectors!

**YOUR CHANCE TO GET DECENT HOUSES—TO BUILD THEM—TO REPAIR THEM—TO RENEW THEM—DEPENDS AGAIN ON YOUR VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS FOR YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL.**

## **THE HEALTH SERVICES**

Good health is impossible in the town unless the council does its work properly. From routine emptying of dustbins to the use of penicillin in municipal hospitals, the town council is on guard for the community. Basic sanitary services such as street cleaning and refuse collection, notification and isolation of cases of infectious diseases and, above all, pure water supply have grown up over the last 100 years under the compulsion of stark necessity.

Epidemic diseases like cholera, now almost unknown, threatened rich as well as poor in the middle of last century, and it is to this more than to any other single factor that we owe the development of the sanitary services.

Sanitary services can, of course, be provided at varying standards from the barely sufficient to the completely satisfactory. The frequency with which dustbins are cleared and streets scavenged, for instance, will certainly make a difference to the pleasure of life; it may make the difference between health and disease.

Town Councils have powers for clearance of vermin, whether rats or bugs; they have some control over the pollution by smoke of the air we breathe. Whilst war-time difficulties persist, many of the services we expect in normal times will be lacking, but it is your business to see that councillors are elected now who will make it their job to secure a common standard in sanitary services—in every district of every town frequent and clean removal of street and house refuse; in every house piped-water supply from pressure mains, fresh-water closets, and freedom from every kind of vermin.

There are other sides to public health work—sanitary provision does not save us from all and every sort of ill health. We need the services of doctors and hospitals; diseases have to be tackled specially both as regards prevention and cure; education in health matters has to be carried out. The work of local councils in these fields varies enormously and overlaps and underlaps the work done by voluntary bodies and by the Central Government under the National Health Insurance Acts.

If you live in a county borough you look to your Town Council for the provision of personal health services, but in the smaller non-county boroughs most of the work falls to be done by the county council. In too many places health and hospital services are still dominated by the old poor law, the idea persisting that they are in some way a charity and not a social right.

These are some of the health services which town councils may provide:—

The provision of general hospitals.

The treatment of tuberculosis.

The welfare of the blind.

Treatment of mental disorder.

Special care for child health.

One would think that all these services were so obviously necessary and desirable that the only conflict would be as to the best way of securing them. Far from this, as Professor Laski has said, even the present patchwork of services has only been secured after "a profound and often passionate struggle."

Proposals made by the Coalition Government under the inspiration of the Beveridge Report (which itself resulted from the action of that great Labour statesman Arthur Greenwood) for the creation of a national health service have been venomously attacked by the reactionaries. It is fortunate indeed that the efforts of big business amongst doctors to wreck these proposals were stopped by election of a Labour Government. Aneurin Bevan as Minister of Health is not likely to solve the problems of Harley Street at the expense of the public interest, as the "National" Mr. Willink proposed to do.

**WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH YOUR VOTE ON NOVEMBER 1st? YOU CAN DETERMINE ON THAT DAY WHETHER NATIONAL PLANS FOR SORTING-OUT AND COMPLETING THE SYSTEM OF PERSONAL HEALTH SERVICES WILL HAVE THE WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT OF THE BODIES THAT WILL BE CALLED UPON TO DEAL WITH THEM ON THE SPOT.**

Not only that: when such proposals are afoot the Government consults the Associations of local authorities, such as the Association of Municipal Corporations and the County Councils Association, and must take notice of the comments and suggestions they offer.

It is of great importance that these bodies themselves should represent the progressive and not the reactionary elements in local government. If you live in a non-county borough which depends on the county council for personal health services there is still a job to be done in

bringing local needs to the notice of the larger body. At least until next spring you will be safe in assuming, save in rare instances, that the county councils need plenty of such prodding. Then when the first post-war county elections are held it is our business to see that the tide of Labour victory still rolls strongly on.

## MOTHERS OF THE FUTURE

The health of the future population of this country will be settled not only by the state of sanitary and personal health services but by the degree of care we give now to mothers of the next generation and to their babies.

We can rightly be proud that the war years have been marked by the lowest death rates of mothers and babies on record. It shows that when there was little we took care to provide for those who most needed it. Even so, these rates are averages for the whole country and they hide great differences between one town and another and even between different parts of the same town.

Many lives would still be saved if the experience of wealthy areas became the general standard. The town council that is a maternity and child welfare authority (and this applies to many smaller towns as well as to the county boroughs) has a special responsibility.

**The brutal but simple truth is that, IF IT DOES NOT USE ITS POWERS TO THE FULL, MOTHERS WILL DIE WHOSE LIVES COULD HAVE BEEN SAVED.**

It can include in its scheme provision of beds in hospitals or maternity homes; the appointment of specially qualified doctors and nurses as advisers at clinics and in the home; the supply of special foods and vitamin preparations free of cost if necessary. Its clinics and welfare centres can be specially designed and built or can be run in draughty and unsuitable adapted premises. It can, in fact, choose whether the whole service is a niggardly concession to public demand or a widely conceived act of co-operation.

There are special acts which deal with the services of midwives and their responsibility for securing medical aid if it is necessary. All county boroughs and a few of the smaller town councils are supervising authorities and are responsible for securing a proper midwifery service. Some do it directly and others use voluntary nursing associations.

If confinements occur at home domestic helps can be paid by the council and the cost, or part of it, recovered from the family. There is room for a big expansion of this service under conditions that will make the work attractive to the right sort of women.

**We have heard a good deal about the risk of a declining population if the birth rate does not rise well above its pre-war level. A LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL WILL SEE THAT WOULD-BE MOTHERS ARE NOT DETERRED BY UNNECESSARY RISKS IN CHILD-BIRTH OR BY LACK OF THE HELP THAT THE COUNCIL CAN PROVIDE, IF IT WILL.**

## **EDUCATIONAL SERVICE**

Innumerable White Papers and plans for social reform were produced during the war, only to receive a lukewarm or even hostile reception from Tory members of Parliament. We have already mentioned the efforts to whittle down the main features of the National Health proposals, whilst some of our present difficulties in housing policy have resulted from failure to tackle the question of land values and methods of public acquisition of land.

One important Act of Parliament did reach the statute book—the Education Act, 1944. Nothing could bring out better the need for election of Labour Councillors than the work that has to be done to turn the intentions of this measure into facts.

The Act sets out to create a national system of education organised in stages—primary, secondary, and further—with suitable provision for children of different aptitudes. The school leaving age is to be raised to 15 and later to 16 with provision for continued part-time education up to age 18. New standards for buildings and playing fields have been established and all forms of public medical treatment made free for children attending publicly provided schools.

Teachers' salaries have been improved in an attempt to draw the best type of labour into the profession. A new system of local administration has been created in county areas leaving main planning and financing of education under the control of county councils but setting up bodies known as Divisional Executives to deal with day-to-day administration.

These bodies are of particular importance to inhabitants of the smaller towns—non-county boroughs—which have the right to nominate members for the Divisional Executive covering the area of the borough: usually several districts have been brought together in one Divisional Executive area.

All this certainly sounds like progress, but older citizens will remember that after the first world war something very similar happened. Then the fine hopes of a new educational deal for workers' children shrivelled and died in the aftermath of unemployment and economy. Is it to happen again?

Nor is the Act as it stands wholly acceptable to progressive opinion, representing as it does a lot of coalition compromise. It leaves untouched

the question of public schools—those nurseries of leadership in the best Conservative tradition. It retains the “dual system” whereby many schools remain under the control of the religious bodies, although if the new building regulations are properly applied the inadequacies of many of these buildings will have to be remedied.

One heartening fact stands out—there was no Labour Government in office after 1918, to-day there is. But with all the real difficulties of the present situation, it is just as important that there shall be town councillors, whether in the county boroughs with full control of their town's education, or as members of Divisional Executives, who will see that there are no local delays or failures. The old central and senior schools now re-classified as secondary schools must be brought up to a standard equal to the best of the old secondary schools and in the meantime talent must be the only claim for admission to the best available schools.

Even whilst complying with the terms of the Act there is room for plenty of variation in standards; the extent of nursery school provision—the goodness or otherwise of school clinics; the development of school-feeding services, allow scope for live and active councillors. Where are these more likely to be found than amongst working-class candidates who know the council schools from the inside?

## MUNICIPAL TRADE

Many town councils provide gas, electricity, and transport services, sometimes singly and sometimes as members of joint boards and committees. As the Labour Government gets into its stride there will be opportunities for the councils to play an increasingly important part within the framework of public ownership. These monopoly services are naturally attractive to financial interests who conceive the end of all human activity to be private profit rather than public interest and there is likely to be a grim battle when this stage of Labour's programme is reached.

When, under the present law, opportunities arise for purchase of company undertakings by local councils there is need for great vigilance on the part of progressive councillors.

During the war councils have been compelled by force of circumstance to enter into another field of trade with great benefit to the people of their areas, by the setting up of British Restaurants. There is certainly nothing in the immediate outlook to suggest that the need for these facilities has ceased, but already private catering interests are inveighing against their continuance in peace.

Our British Restaurants are needed just as much in peace as in war to provide cheap nourishing meals, particularly for the large number of workers in shops, offices, and small factories, where canteen meals are not practicable. The boy just starting working at 14 or 15 years of age

needs as solid a dinner as he got at school, and, indeed, to jeopardise his midday meal at a time when he is having to work longer and more intensively is putting a great strain on his developing body.

For his limited pocket private catering has little to offer; the British Restaurant has filled and must continue to fill a gap in our social provision. The very success of municipal trading as of co-operative enterprise has been one of the best proofs of the practicability of the Labour and Co-operative programme of public ownership of the means of production and of natural monopolies. **YOU NEED COUNCILLORS WHO UNDERSTAND WHAT BERNARD SHAW LONG AGO DESCRIBED AS "THE COMMON SENSE OF MUNICIPAL TRADING."**

In a short pamphlet it is impossible to describe at length the many services that are or can be provided by the Town Councils. We have chosen so far certain important ones that raise immediate issues to which we are all alive. There are many more that demand the full vigilance of live councillors.

Arrears of work on roads and public buildings will give scope for men and women with the natural shrewdness and hard-headedness of those who have built up such great organisations as the Trade Unions and the Co-operative Societies. Pressure is needed for more democratic control of local police forces. Protection against fraud and adulteration in food and other trades must be ensured. The powers that councils can exercise in checking weights and measures and in carrying out inspections and analysis of food and drugs are an important part of the campaign against racketeering and black market dealing that are encouraged by shortage of supplies.

Unscrupulous traders have not hesitated to put substitutes on the market containing ingredients of a highly dangerous character, as various cases in the courts have testified. **HERE AGAIN IS A FIELD OF WORK IN WHICH LABOUR COUNCILLORS WILL SEE THAT MAXIMUM USE IS MADE OF ALL LAWS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PEOPLE.**

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

Nor does the work of the council end at the protection of citizens against dirt, disease, and human depravity. It has a positive contribution to make to physical and moral standards and to simple enjoyment of life. Parks and recreation grounds (with special arrangements for children), allotment gardens, and swimming baths—both indoor and outdoor—can all be provided within the powers enjoyed by even the smaller boroughs; so can libraries, museums, art galleries, community centres, and public halls, which are not only centres of pleasure, but by providing sources of knowledge and places of public meeting are essential to democracy.

**The extent to which these services are available is a useful test as to the outlook of the council, since most of them are in the class of the things that can be provided at the discretion of the local authorities.**

We can bring to mind one Tory-dominated south country borough which at the outbreak of war had a derelict indoor swimming bath and no public library or public halls. Compare this with a progressive north country authority of the same type with a central library and three branches, five sets of public rooms, and three swimming baths!

Those smaller boroughs which under the Education Act, 1944, have ceased to have direct control over primary education in their areas can find valuable work along these lines which will supplement the formal educational work of the County Councils and the Divisional Executives. Given the will a start can be made despite shortages of buildings and supplies.

**IF YOU WANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE AND DECENT PLACES FOR MEETINGS, DISCUSSION, AND RECREATION, YOU WILL VOTE FOR LABOUR CANDIDATES WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL CITIZENS.**

## **VALUE FOR MONEY**

That they will keep down or reduce the rates is invariably the claim made by opponents of progress in local affairs. The suggestion that such a claim in any way constitutes a policy was well exposed by the outspoken vicar who told his councillor audience that it was "the negation of responsibility."

Rates are simply local taxes. Every year local councils have to collect enough money to meet the cost of the services they provide themselves and, outside the County Boroughs, part of the amount needed by the County Council. The Government makes grants from national taxes and in round terms meets about half the cost of local services after income from rents, fees, and other charges has been taken into account. This excludes those services of which the cost is met by charging for the quantity used, such as gas and electricity supply and transport.

Ability to pay rates is measured by the rental value of property occupied, whether for personal or business purposes, except that agricultural land and buildings wholly, and industrial undertakings partly, are relieved from their liability.

**"DERATING," AS THIS IS CALLED WAS A FINE EXAMPLE OF TORY ECONOMICS. IN RELATION TO INDUSTRY IT WAS DESCRIBED BY NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN IN 1938 AS AN IMPORTANT WAY OF CURING UNEMPLOYMENT BY STIMULATING EXPORT TRADE; IN FACT, IT MADE NO MEASURABLE DIFFERENCE TO THE EXPORT SELLING PRICE OF ANY COMMODITY, BUT IT GAVE A HANDSOME BONUS TO BREWERY AND TOBACCO SHAREHOLDERS AMONGST OTHERS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE GENERAL BODY OF RATEPAYERS.**

Incidentally, fixing the total rateable value of an area is a complicated business hedged by decisions of the law courts resulting from the ingenuity of lawyers in the protection of property interest. When it has been determined the council is able to estimate the amount of money that would be raised by a tax of one penny on each pound of rateable value. This is known as a "penny rate." The total cost of services for the year is then divided by the estimated yield of a penny rate. This gives the local rate for the year. The amount payable by each householder is fixed by multiplying the rate by the rateable value of the house which he occupies.

Rates on small properties are often collected from the landlord, who in his turn picks them up as part of the rent. It is very important to remember this fact, because many people in this position fail to realise that they are in fact ratepayers and as such fully entitled to their share in the services and benefits that the council provides. LESS UNDERSTOOD IS THE FACT THAT THE WORKING CLASSES PAY IN PROPORTION TO THEIR INCOMES A MUCH HIGHER PERCENTAGE IN RENT (AND BECAUSE RATES ARE RELATED TO RENTS, A MUCH HIGHER PROPORTION IN RATES ALSO) THAN DO THE WELL-TO-DO. Thus the idea that local social services benefit the poor at the expense of the well-to-do is complete nonsense.

Is it likely in the face of these facts that Labour and Co-operative Councillors will have any less respect for the genuine economy of efficient public services than their opponents? Neither they nor the social groups from which they come have any interest in contracts let on a cost plus basis, nor are they likely to benefit from inflation of land values by public purchase of adjoining plots at something more than the rock-bottom price.

IN THE TEN YEARS THAT LABOUR HAS HAD CONTROL ON THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL NO CHARGE OF CORRUPTION OR INEFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FINANCES HAS EVER BEEN MAINTAINED.

Labour and Co-operative Councillors will certainly not accept the present rating system and the relationship between the central and local exchequer as the last word in human wisdom merely because the first has a sixteenth century pedigree and the second has grown up as a hotchpotch of expediencies. They will give proper consideration to such alternatives as taxation of land values so that the increase of values arising from public action can be secured for the community.

**YOU HAVE BEEN PAYING THE PIPER FOR A LONG TIME: NOW IF YOU CHOOSE YOUR COUNCILLORS WISELY YOU CAN CALL THE TUNE.**

## **YOUR OWN PEOPLE**

Except in those instances where Labour has gained control, our Town Councils have been dominated in the past by people who not only represent the class interests of a small section of the town but who are by the nature of their private occupations most likely to be swayed by purely personal gain when making decisions on public policy.

When you elect a Labour and Co-operative Council you choose for your town government men and women representing, and largely drawn from, the biggest class of the community—the working class. They know intimately how the great bulk of their fellows live, and their policy is framed to promote good living conditions for the majority.

They know what life is like in a four-roomed house; they use the town's buses and trams; their children attend the council's schools and welfare centres and play on the public recreation grounds. Their private interests **are** the public interests. They see a road-widening scheme with the same eyes as the majority of the townspeople—does it make for road safety? Does it ease the journey home from work? Not “Does it profit the owner of the land or take trade from this one and give it to that.”

Only the Labour and Co-operative Parties can give an undertaking such as the following which has been issued by the Kingston-on-Thames Labour Party in its address to the electorate: “We give a pledge that no Labour candidate is seeking election for any purpose connected with his trade or profession, and none will accept a benefit of any kind from election as a councillor. No Labour Councillor will accept employment by the council either for himself or for any member of his or her family.”

Just because Labour and Co-operative Councillors are true representatives of the town's interests they have nothing to hide from those who elect them. They are anxious and willing to report to the electors what the council is doing and to seek the advice of the electorate.

Tory councillors complain that Labour councillors make decisions before they enter the council chamber. Of course they do! They read their agendas and reports well before the meeting and take counsel with one another. They act as a team.

Could there be a more welcome contrast to the spectacle of lethargic "independents" opening their papers for the first time as they take their seats in committee, or to the true caucus decisions that are made in the comfortable clubs of the well-to-do, by councillors who do not even formally acknowledge responsibility to any interests save their own?

The choice in local as in national government is the same. On one side stands the Tory Party, masquerading under various names, but standing as always for vested interests and the policies of the well-to-do. On the other stand the Labour and Co-operative Movements, leading the progressive forces, fighting to use the resources of the community for the benefit of all and seeking in all their policies to better the lot of the under-dog.

We believe that the people of Britain are going to back up a progressive Government at Westminster with progressive local authorities in the towns and cities where so much of the day-to-day work of government is done.

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# A PRESS without A PEER

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